This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

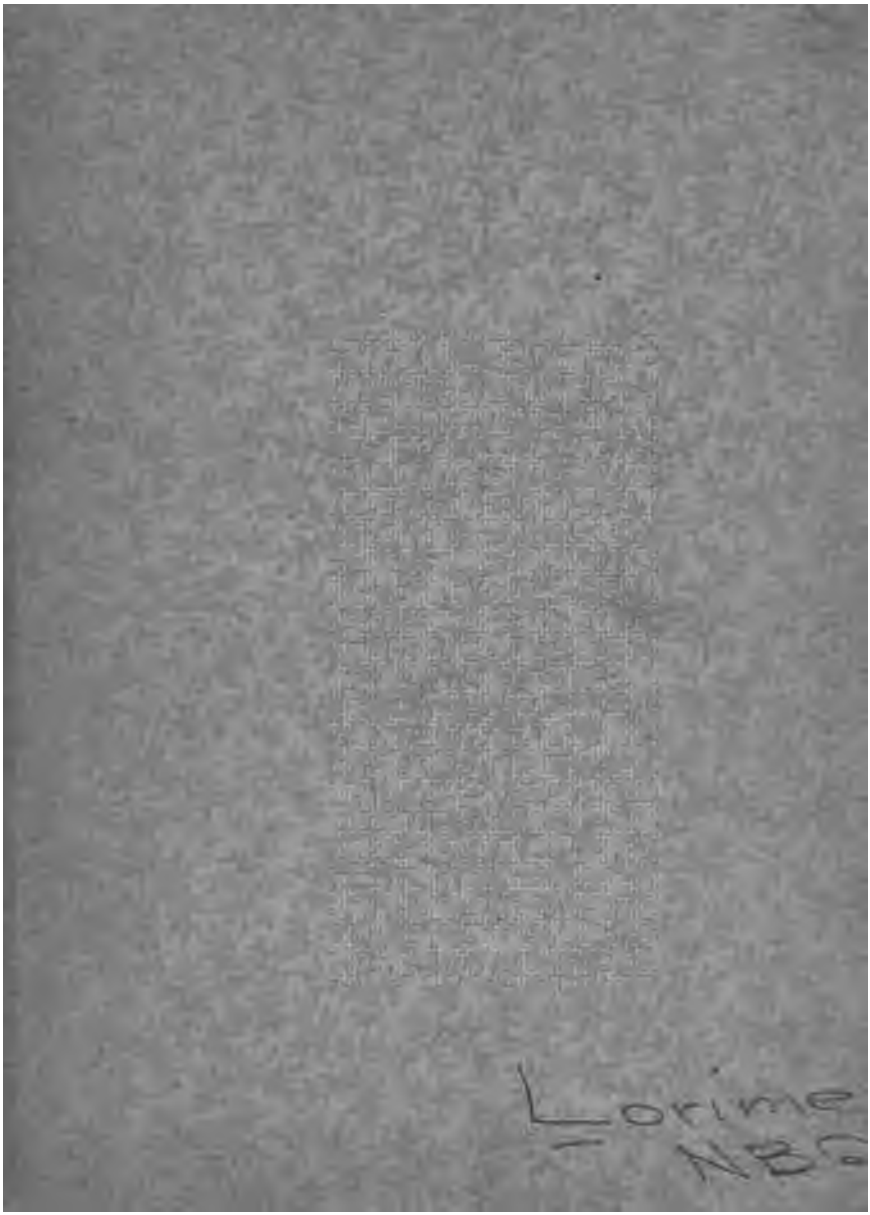
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3 3433 07482705 0

WHAT I KNOW ABOUT BOOKS


Lorimer
NBC

WHAT I KNOW ABOUT BOOKS

AND

HOW TO USE THEM.

BY

GEORGE C. LORIMER,
Minister at the Temple.

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

WILLIAM L. LAWRENCE, LL.D.
Chicago, Illinois.

"Come, and take choice of all my library,
And so beguile thy sorrow."
Shakespeare.

BOSTON:
JAMES H. EARLE, PUBLISHER,
178 WASHINGTON STREET.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
683863
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R

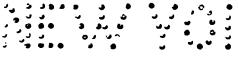
COPYRIGHT, 1892,
By JAMES H. EARLE.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

"He, whose hours
Are by domestic pleasures uncaressed
And unenlivened; who exists whole years
Apart from benefits received or done
'Mid the transactions of the bustling crowd;
Who neither hears nor feels a wish to hear
Of the world's interests — such a one hath need
Of a quick fancy, and an active heart,
That, for the day's consumption, BOOKS may yield
A not unwholesome food, and earth and air
Supply his morbid humor with delight."

Wordsworth.



"Un livre est un ami qui ne change jamais."

Pixéricourt.

* W. S. Reese, Mar. 27 - 1915

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

CONTENTS.

Charles Lamb and London Book Stalls — The Purchasers of Old Books — Charms of the Library — Current Literature — Perils connected with Literary Opulence — Courses of Reading — How to collect a Library — Object of Present Volume — Literary Fellowship and Mental Correspondence. Pages ix–xvi.

I.

Shakespeare on Study — Proportion between the Intellectual and Practical Life — Carlyle, Kingsley, and Arnold — Warning Words — A Worthy Creed — The Ruskinian Guild — Paul's Exhortation — Rank of the Bible as Literature — Fryth and Sir Thomas More — Neglect of the Bible in Educational Institutions — Roman Catholic Schools — Other Books to be studied — Paul and the Classics — The Apostle and Seneca. Pages 17–24.

II.

Heathen Books condemned — Gregory the Great and the Bishop of Vienna — Modern Antagonism to Secular Knowledge — Intolerance and Ignorance — Greek Authors and their Relation to Bible Study — General Literature of Service in expounding the

Scriptures — Foxcar's Hero — The Idea of a Sinless Literature — Answer of John Henry Newman. Pages 25–32.

III.

The True Mind Medicine — Lord Bacon on Books — Opinions of Carlyle, Petrarch, and Others — The Multiplication of Books — Volumes highest in Character lowest in Price — Abundance of the Necessaries of Life — *Saturday Review* on the Situation — Uses of Paper in Japan — Unread Books — On Selecting — De Quincey on the Misfortunes of Life — Ruskin on the Art of Discrimination in Literature — Carlyle on *Choice of Books* — Duty of Pastors to the Young. Pages 33–43.

IV.

Philosophy and Poetry — The Muses and the Metaphysicians — Reflection of National Life and of Humanity in Classical Literature — A Scotch Story — Poetry and Philosophy in Browning — A Goodly Fellowship — On commending the Best in Literature — M. Jules Simon's View — The Advantage of Reading the Greatest Authors — The New Movement in France — Decay of the Sensational School — Carlyle an Exponent of the Veracious. Pages 44–51.

V.

History and Fiction — Objections against Novels — Pernicious Effect of Base Literature — The Frequent Falseness of History, and the Possible Truthfulness of Fiction — Prejudiced Historians — The Test of Truth — Value of Fiction — Sir Philip Sidney — Histories classified — Philosophy — Best Method of Study — Recent Works recommended. — Pages 52–60.

VI.

Biography and its Advantages — Famous Men the Creators of Epochs — Plutarch's *Lives* — Our Fellowship with the Great — Froude on the Saints — Heroic Characters in Modern Times — Some Notable Examples — Essays on *Richter*, *Burns*, *Milton*, *Bunyan*, and Others — Their Influence on Humanity — A Picture of the Corn Law Rhymer, Ebenezer Elliott. Pages 61–66.

VII.

Books on Religion and Science — The Two Domains — Unscientific Treatment of Religion — Reverence of Darwin and Tyndall — George Lewes on the Hatred of Science — The Prejudice of Arnold of Rugby against Livy of Rome — Good in Science. — Leo of Byzantium — Deleterious Effects of Some Religious Books — A Sunday-School Story — The Good and Bad Boys — Huckstering Virtues — Fairy Tales — Some Valuable Works on Religion — Ruskin as an Author — A List of Volumes on Scientific Subjects — Sociology — Religion and Social Reform — The Approaching Revolution — Books on Sociology, Politics, and Government — No Remedy in Dynamite and Bullets. Pages 67–79.

VIII.

Lord Brougham's Advice — A Taste for Reading — The Views of Sir John Herschel — Value of Works Expository and Critical — A List of Useful Books on Literature — My Clerical Friend — Indebtedness to Sir John Lubbock and A. P. Russell — Difficulty of Reading wisely and profitably — My Own Method — Crutches and Wings — Aimlessness and

Irreverence — Homage of Soul to Genius — Other Desirable Qualities — The Design of Reading — How it may be Perverted — The Literary Opium Habit — Milton on Superficial Reading. Pages 80–91.

IX.

Another Precaution — Lack of Moderation — What a Sailor saw — The Daily Press — Too much read for the Amount understood — Reading Clubs — An Extreme Case — Club Cramming — Assistance rendered by capable Instructors — Importance of Self-Reliance — Right of Judgment. Pages 92–97.

X.

In Understanding an Author — Reading a Great Book — An Illustration from the Experience of Mr. Morse — Benjamin West as a Teacher — Wordsworth on fastening Images on the Brain — Devotion to a Single Author — Few Books well read — Bias in Literature to be avoided — The Parson and Novel Reading — Revulsion following Excess — Partisanship in Books — Ferrara Geese — A Deplorable Possibility — A Library representative of the Universe — Communion with Books and Communion with Self — Self-Knowledge — The Soul's Speech — Secret of Death — A Worthy End. Pages 98–110.

INTRODUCTION.

SOMEWHERE I have read an incident said to have occurred in the life of Charles Lamb. It appears that on his way to his place of business he was in the habit of passing one of those curiosities, a London book-stall, where he would halt, read, and purchase. On one occasion he made up his mind firmly, as he thought, that he would not allow himself to be tempted into examining the treasures that had so often beguiled him; but upon arrival at the stall he found the fascination too much for his resolution. As usual, he looked, hesitated, and then picked up a book that attracted his notice, became absorbed in it, and did not lay it down until, when he had nearly imbibed all its contents, he was aroused by the impatient bookseller.

Such is the story; it may have happened to Lamb or a hundred other men. It was likely to happen to anybody, and is likely to occur in the life of any one. For though all other stores be neglected, there is one that is never deserted, one counter never free from customers, and that the place devoted to the sale of

books, the table upon which literary wares are displayed. No matter how hurried we feel we are, we have time to look at a book.

Impressed with this notion, some time since, when considering this subject, we took our stand opposite an old bookstore. All classes and conditions seemed to be represented by those who went within or loitered near the portal. Well-dressed men, clerical-looking persons, the mistress of the typewriter, and even the messenger boy stopped to look at the books piled up without any real arrangement upon shelves and tables, and offered upon the lowest terms.

There is certainly something very remarkable in the fascination to possess literature. Shrewd merchants have not been slow to detect profit for themselves in this element of human nature. The old-fashioned corner bookstore of Boston finds a rival in the dry-goods palace and the railway news stand, where the passenger is led into the purchase of a book that perhaps he really wants, but more likely does not need.

The fascination extends to our houses and our clubs. The latter are not furnished without some pretence toward literary property, while the most attractive place in the house is not the drawing-room, not even for those fortunate enough to possess one, the art gallery,

but the library, whether it be elegantly furnished, with all contrivances for ease to the person and delight for the eye, or according to the strictest economy.

This fascination is being increased to a great extent by the daily paper and the weekly journal, probably more by the monthly periodicals, that come to us gorgeous with illustrations, inviting in contents, and above all, with interesting and suggestive book notices. Years ago but two of these journals claimed our attention, *Harper's* and *The Atlantic*, with perhaps the *North American Review*, but now their number is legion. Along with this increase of magazines there is a corresponding increase of books, some of which, it is true, appear first in these same magazines, but by far the great majority come without any such association.

It is interesting, suggestive, and profitable, and hence desirable, to inquire into the secret of this fascination. Perhaps it is simple curiosity that leads one to wonder what a volume may contain; perhaps the desire to enter into the society of men who can perform the wonder of writing a book and securing a publisher, without much thought as to what the volume contains; perhaps the simple idea of owning a book — the craze of the bibliomaniac; perhaps finally, and far better than all, the real hunger

for knowledge, the real thirst for mental power. But whatever may be the controlling element of this fancy, whether it show itself in the desire to furnish a room with books in fine bindings, or to purchase them in any shape so long as the contents will stock the brain, the fascination is not to be derided but to be stripped of its folly, and made to act as the helper of the soul.

The dangers arising from the desire of book ownership are many, and are being increased by the magnificent opportunities afforded by the literary opulence to which we have referred. As the traveller who has dreamed of the great European capitals and is having his dream gratified by his presence in them, but who also finds himself perplexed by the multiplicity of the objects which claim his attention, and anxious, also, lest he shall make an unwise selection, and so waste his strength, time, and money, so the purchaser of even a few books often finds himself puzzled and seriously distressed lest, in the midst of so many privileges, he shall fail to possess himself of the highest, and waste his mental energies.

For this reason it is natural and worthy for him to call for some advice. Nor will he be without opportunity in this direction. From time out of mind "courses of reading" have

been given to the literary seeker, sage counsel offered to relieve. Yet it must be said in truth that the inquirer needs to be told some pretty plain facts, some, perhaps, which may not be to his liking. Ambition to possess a library that when seen may serve as a recommendation of his mental ability and moral inclination may be a very high and worthy characteristic, but surely it is not the highest, for it is only a species of pride.

We are reminded here of an experience that once befell us. We were in the library of a prominent person who had grown up in a most obscure pathway of life, but who had obtained considerable political influence and more money. He had a superb collection of books, but we could not understand how any relation could exist between the volumes on the shelves and the intellectual grasp of the man as we knew him. The secret came out one day when we were made acquainted with the fact that his secretary, a graduate of one of our best colleges, had received *carte blanche* to make the selection. It was in fact the secretary's library. Knowing him as we did, we at once saw the correspondence between the volumes in the cases and the brain of the secretary. In other words, the selection of a library should not rest upon ambition to own books, but upon

correspondence between the condition of the brain and heart on the one hand, and of the selection on the other.

This will allow one to feel no chagrin, but on the contrary a proper amount of pleasure, when he discovers that he is turning away from volumes which are too high for him now, or from those upon which he formerly looked with approbation.

It is precisely at this point that so many become discouraged in their endeavor to follow out courses of reading. The fault may be in the choice of a course, but more likely the difficulty is that it is not the proper course for the mind to follow, even though it may be intricate studies that are needed.

Books are related not only to the mind as suggested, but they are related to each other. In order to make a proper selection, one must recognize that there are great principles lying beneath literature. Though we may subdivide it into scientific, historical, etc., yet after all there are certain relationships existing between different branches of literature that need to be recognized and set forth clearly, succinctly, comprehensively, and without prolixity.

It is the object of the present volume, as indicated to us, to establish the minds of those seeking to build up a library upon precisely

such a scientific basis. So that alcoves shall not be as foreign countries, separated in a very disagreeable way by fixed barriers, but rather like the States of our own Union, holding individual powers and properties, but also one common brotherhood.

For our own part we cannot help but review with dismal feelings our experience in attempting to follow out suggestions in regard to such courses of reading as those to which we have just alluded. We found them to be excellent in theory, but the theory always presupposed attainments we did not possess, leisure we did not command, and money which we could not obtain. We find that this experience has been that of many others. We venture the idea that the abandonment of paths of home reading on the part of so many has been largely due to this cause.

Now this is a disaster of greater magnitude than we have been apt to consider, especially when it affects the young. For though desultory reading may be the amusement of middle age, it is the enemy of youth. If now to those who contemplate setting apart a reasonable amount of time and money to improvement of the mind there may be given the idea of literary fellowship and mental correspondence, if to them there may be given a bird's-eye view of

the literary landscape by which they may see the courses of its rivers, the extent of its plains, the range of its mountains, and the unification of its territory, great good must come.

We congratulate the readers of this volume upon the purpose contemplated and so well executed by the eminent author.

Few men have enjoyed so wide opportunities for becoming acquainted with literature, and fewer have shown amid the exacting cares of public life the ability to select wisely fruitful sources of mental inspiration.

We cannot but feel that in this present endeavor the cause of truth which is so conscientiously and ably served by him in the interest of the rising generation, and which is ever closely allied to the generous impulses of his own heart, and the building of the Redeemer's Kingdom, in which he has been a faithful laborer for so many years, will be advanced by the publication of this volume.

To the public he needs no introduction, but if by any word of ours we may be able to indicate appreciation of plans and suggestions herein unfolded, and which are the ripe result of years of reflection, we shall be very happy to have been permitted to utter this word of introduction.

WM. M. LAWRENCE.

CHICAGO,

WHAT I KNOW ABOUT BOOKS

AND

HOW TO USE THEM.

I.

THERE is some sense, and manifestly more sense than poetry, in the following lines from England's greatest dramatist: —

> "Study is like the heaven's glorious sun,
> That will not be deep search'd with saucy looks:
> Small have continual plodders ever won,
> Save base authority from others' books.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "So study evermore is overshot;
> While it doth study to have what it would,
> It doth forget to do the thing it should:
> And when it hath the thing it hunteth most,
> 'Tis won, as towns with fire; so won, so lost."

Shakespeare is undoubtedly correct. There ought to be some adequate proportion between the intellectual and the practical life. To deteriorate in worthiness of character as knowledge is increased, to become helpless

in ordinary affairs as the mind accumulates its wealth, is one of the saddest contingencies ever contemplated. Of what particular value "the authority" we may have become familiar with, if we have sacrificed the power of independent thought! And of what service the conquest of a city, if it has been subdued by such methods as to render its treasures unavailable! These surely are instances of *Love's Labor Lost.*

Against such mistakes we are warned by different authors of eminence. Carlyle writes: "It is not by books alone, nor by books chiefly, that a man becomes in all parts a man. A man perfects himself by work much more than by reading." Hence Canon Kingsley expresses the sentiment: "This is the true and heroical rest, which only is worthy gentlemen and sons of God." And Dr. Arnold has recorded a similar conviction: "I would rather send a boy to Van Diemen's Land, where he must work for his bread, than send him to Oxford to live in luxury, without any desire in his mind to avail himself of his advantages."

The studious habit may be overdone. Culture may be too excessive for the real good of the native mental soil, and reading may degenerate into a mere diversion, withdrawing human energy from serious and imperative obligations. My first word, therefore, has to be one of warning against extremes and against unwisdom in the pursuit of a most laudable object.

I would have my young readers adopt as their creed the resolution governing the Ruskinian Guild of St. George: "I will strive to raise my own body and soul daily into higher power of duty and happiness; not in rivalship or contention with others, but for the delight and honor of others, and for the joy and peace of my own life." And I would have them in purposing thus nobly, to realize that while not everything, and indeed far from being everything, familiarity with valuable books, according to the author of *Sesame and Lilies*, may in no small degree conduce to its ultimate attainment. That is, reading and study are means among other means; not on the one hand to be over-

estimated, nor on the other to be ignored, especially in this age, when, as Heine expresses it, "the intellectual dominion of the individual has ceased, — the intellectual rule of the many has commenced."

I have no doubt that the Apostle Paul, when he exhorted Timothy to "give attendance to reading," had special and perhaps exclusive reference to the reading of the Scriptures. This is the view of the most eminent critics, and I see no reason for questioning its soundness. Above and before all other writings ought the Bible to be prized. Viewed simply as literature, its claims are paramount; such a composition, for instance, as that of *Job* surpassing in genuine poetic spirit that of *Faust*, while the magnificent flights of eloquence that fill the pages of Isaiah are unmatched by Wordsworth; and not even can Browning, though in some respects suggesting his dramatic and metaphysical style, compare with Jeremiah in loftiness of thought and grandeur of expression.

Readily can we comprehend the solicitude of

Fryth as set forth in his reply to Sir Thomas More: "This hath been offered you, is offered, and shall be offered. Grant that the Word of God, I mean the text of Scripture, may go abroad in our English tongue . . . and my brother Tyndale and I have done, and will promise you to write no more. If you will not grant this condition, then will we be doing while we have breath, and show in few words that the Scripture doth in many, and so at least save some." (*Doctrine of the Sacrament.*) And with similar ardor should we make a way for the Bible in our own intellectual life, convinced that its relation to us as individuals will stimulate mental activity and refinement as it has always quickened national enlightenment and culture. As the literatures of England and Germany have their roots in this sacred soil, so should we venerate and honor it, that it may once more and forever nourish mighty trees and fragrant flowers of America's future thinkers and singers. Important and necessary is it that such a word as this should be spoken at the present time,

when so many seem minded to put the Bible away. The Bible has not only been removed from the common schools in many places and prayer forbidden, but as Mulford says in his book, *The Nation*, it has been "removed from the course of study in universities and from academies, and has no place, corresponding simply as a history and literature to the history and literature of Greece and Rome."

That Bible whose composition appealed to the refined taste of Matthew Arnold; that Bible whose dignity and sublimity aroused the soul of Heine so that he regarded the volume as a breath of Paradise; that Bible whose prose the sceptical Frederic Harrison extols so highly; that Bible which George Eliot read daily at Witely, and which was to her a very precious and sacred book; yea, that Bible which even Diderot, while rejecting, commended to his child as her best guide in morals and purity, — that Bible the cross-roads statesmen, who acquire so remarkable an influence in our State legislatures, will not permit so much as to be named in the secular halls of learning

which they have voted to rear; and it is clear to me if the present tendency is not checked, we shall find in this country, especially in the Northwest, that the only schools where religion is taught will be those of the Roman Catholic faith, which means in the long run a Roman Catholic population, or, what is worse, an atheistical and anarchical one.

While Paul's admonition centres in the duty of the minister to know and interpret Revelation, it is not to be so construed as to preclude or prohibit the perusal of other volumes. Let us not forget that he who addressed Timothy was himself a scholar. Not only does he quote in his famous speech on Mars Hill the Greek poets, Cleanthes and Aratus, but, as Dr. Lightfoot has shown at length and with considerable ingenuity, evinces familiar acquaintance with the teachings of his contemporary, Seneca the Stoic.

Paul assures us that "the God who made the world and all things therein . . . dwelleth not in temples made with hands," and Seneca writes: "Temples must not be built to God of

stones piled on high: He must be consecrated in the heart of man." Moreover, the apostle declares that "God is not far from each one of us," while the philosopher says, "God is near thee; He is with thee; He is within." Other parallels might be noted, but these are sufficient for our purpose. (See Lightfoot on *Philippians.*)

These agreements, if nothing more, indicate the breadth and varied character of Paul's attainments, and fully warrant the inference, that while he would at all times give the first place to the Scriptures, he would not be so understood as to deter ministers or laymen from familiar companionship with uninspired authors. I therefore feel at perfect liberty to enlarge the scope of his words to the measure of his enlightened spirit, and to urge on my young friends to honor their youth by giving themselves to reading in every distinctive field throughout the glorious "Republic of Letters."

II.

IT is not, however, to be concealed that the wisdom of thus countenancing and encouraging the studious perusal of volumes outside of those which comprise what Jerome termed "The Divine Library" (*Bibliotheca Divina*) has been seriously questioned in the past, and is not uniformly conceded in the present. In the so-called *Apostolical Constitutions*, heathen books are condemned; "for what hast thou to do with such foreign discourses, or laws, or false prophets, which subvert the faith of the unstable?" Gregory the Great (A. D. 544–604) forbade ecclesiastics of the highest as well as of the lowest rank to study heathen literature, and reproved the Bishop of Vienna for teaching the clergy grammar, which necessitated some degree of familiarity with the works of uninspired writers.

While these extreme views are no longer held among enlightened leaders, occasionally an ambitious layman or an obscure preacher renders himself conspicuous by denouncing the acquisition of secular knowledge. Sometimes a business man, "a baker or candlestick-maker," whose monetary success has abnormally developed his self-assurance, undertakes to lecture the meek and long-suffering pastors of pious flocks on the impropriety, not to say the manifest wickedness, of presuming to read anything but the Bible. That they should dip into science, that they should treasure in their memories the flummeries of the rhetoricians, that they should acquaint themselves with the principles of art or the abstruse abstractions of philosophy, especially as they are living in a world fast hastening to endless perdition, are iniquitous gratifications incomprehensible to the indignant critic. It is not, of course, to be supposed that this horrified layman is representative of a very large constituency; but his type unhappily makes up in virulence and acrimony what it lacks in extent and intelligence.

It is of little use to argue with such men. They are intrenched in intolerance and ignorance, and the world must patiently wait their slow extinction through the operation of that most precious law which, in the long run, exterminates what is unfit to survive. Useless were it to remind them that Moses was learned in the lore of the Egyptians, and that Solomon was wise in all kinds of wisdom, and that John was evidently taught in the philosophy of Alexandria, and that Paul was not indifferent to the claims of heathen classics. In some way satisfactory to themselves, they dispose of all such cases, and, with an amusing air of infallibility, repeat and reaffirm an *Index Expurgatorius* so impartially all-exclusive as to excite the envy of the Vatican authorities.

While these incorrigibles may be left severely alone, it may not be amiss to address a few words of remonstrance to members of the younger generation who, unhappily, are not altogether beyond the reach of their contracted and contracting opinions.

I would have them realize how impossible

it would have been for them to have had any New Testament at all had it not been for the Greek language, which was developed and perfected by a long line of Greek authors who enriched all ages with their poetry, eloquence, and philosophy. Cicero has remarked, in his treatise on *The Nature of the Gods*, that various Romans deeply skilled in the Greek tongue were unable to communicate the ideas it had imparted to them in the Latin speech, so inadequate was the latter medium in the days of Julius Cæsar for spiritual and metaphysical discussion. Nor should it be forgotten that the primitive statements of Christian doctrine and their logical coherence were due to the copious and flexible vocabulary of a people who had been taught by Homer, Plato, Socrates, Pericles, and Demosthenes. But if the Gospels and Epistles of the Bible could not have been penned had there been no Hellenist literature, how are they to be understood apart from some knowledge of that literature either through originals or translations? Helps, moreover, are constantly demanded for the interpre-

tation of Holy Writ that are derived from antiquarians, lexicographers, and historians; and it is impossible to appreciate the significance and beauty of many of its passages if the light of contemporaneous scholarship is withdrawn.

Even general literature of the first class, if not absolutely indispensable to its exposition, is of great service in furnishing analogies and illustrations that tend to illuminate its meaning. Whatever familiarizes the student with human nature, with its genius, its resources, its weaknesses, its achievements, its ambitions and aspirations, must prove helpful to him as he seeks to determine the force of the Divine Message. Only as he perceives earthly needs can he appreciate the character and the sufficiency of the Heavenly supply; and, therefore, while in all respects it may not be well for him to imitate Foxcar's hero, he may yet learn a lesson of wisdom from his example as set forth in the quaint verse: —

"That from all books the Book of books may gain,
He mingle-mangles sacred and profane;
Quotes Swift with Daniel; Byron with Saint Peter;
Ezekiel with the English Opium-eater;

Hood with Habakkuk; Crabbe with Zechariah;
Landor with Job, and Lamb with Jeremiah;
The prophet Samuel with his namesake Pepys;
Bunyan and Jean Paul with th' Apocalypse;
King Solomon with Shakespeare, Scott, Racine;
Esther with Edmund Spenser's Faerie Queene;
With Moses, Dryden, Dante, Doctor Donne;
Accomplish'd St. John with Divine Saint John."

But if it is objected that the mind ought to restrict itself to the reading of the Bible in the interest of its own purity, or at least ought not to venture beyond religious books that tend to foster its instructions, I must answer that if so inclined, if seeking contamination, such a mind can find enough for its defilement even on the sacred page. But all such cavilling proceeds on an entirely wrong assumption concerning the function and character of literature, whether inspired or uninspired. It is somehow taken for granted that as the Scriptures are from God, everything contained therein must be holy, and that writings not from Him, however elevated, must have in them debasing elements. I am not acquainted with any wiser reply to these misconceptions than that which was penned by John Henry Newman in 1889,

equally applicable to works sacred and profane, and which may be taken as a final and a sufficient reason for not discouraging and condemning the widest reading: —

"Some one will say to me perhaps our youth shall not be corrupted. We will dispense with all general or national literature whatever, if it be so exceptional; we will have a Christian literature of our own, as pure, as true as the Jewish. You cannot have it. . . . From the nature of the case, if literature is to be made a study of human nature, you cannot have a Christian literature. It is a contradiction in terms to attempt a sinless literature of sinful men. You may gather together something very great and high, something higher than any literature ever was; and when you have done so, you will find that it is not literature at all. You will simply have left the delineation of man, as such, and have substituted for it, as far as you have had anything to substitute, that of man, as he is or might be, under special advantages. Give up the study of man, as such, if so it must be; but say you do so.

Do not say you are studying him, his history, his mind, and his heart, when you are studying something else. Man is a being of genius, passion, intellect, conscience, power. He exercises his great gifts in various ways, in great deeds, in great thoughts, in heroic acts, in hateful crimes. . . . Literature records them all to the life." (*Scope and Nature of University Education.*)

III.

MUCH has been written in praise of books both in poetry and prose. The oldest library of which we have any memorial had inscribed over the gateway the words, "Medicine for the Mind"; and without committing one's self for or against the no-drug theory of our Christian Scientists, it may be assumed that the contents of such a library are the true nostrums of the mind healer's art. Lord Bacon summed up the value of various kinds of volumes in this way: "Histories make men wise; poets, witty; mathematics, subtle; natural science, deep; moral philosophy, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to debate." These surely are curative virtues not to be despised by a race that suffers intensely from the maladies of foolishness, silliness, superficiality, frivolity, irreverence, and sophistry.

Mrs. Barbauld says "that books are per-

petual censors on men and manners; they judge without partiality, and reprove without fear or affection." As an English bishop quaintly wrote: "These are the masters who instruct us without rods and ferules, without hard words and anger, without clothes or money. If you approach them, they are not asleep; . . . if you are ignorant, they cannot laugh at you." Carlyle has described a collection of them as a real university; and Cicero has compared a room where there are none as a body without a soul.

"Books," according to Jeremy Collier, "are a guide in youth and an entertainment for age. They support us under solitude, and keep us from being a burden to ourselves. They help us to forget the crossness of men and things; compose our cares and our passions; and lay our disappointments asleep. When we are weary of the living, we may repair to the dead, who have nothing of peevishness, pride, or design in their conversation."

"I have friends," remarks Petrarch, "whose society is extremely agreeable to me; they are

of all ages, and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honors for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them, for they are always at my service, and I admit them to my company, and dismiss them from it whenever I please. They are never troublesome, but immediately answer every question I ask them. Some relate to me the events of past ages, while others reveal to me the secrets of nature. Some teach me how to live, and others how to die. Some, by their vivacity, drive away my cares and exhilarate my spirits; while others give fortitude to my mind, and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires, and to depend wholly on myself."

"All round the room my silent servants wait —
My friends in every season, bright and dim,
Angels and seraphim
Come down and murmur to me, sweet and low,
And spirits of the skies all come and go
Early and late."

Since the invention of printing these servants and friends have marvellously multiplied, and

unhappily, with their increase, there has been noticeable some deterioration of character. Appalling is the number of books, and still "of making them there is no end." Alas! calamitous fatality. And here is another, just to fulfil the ominous prognostic, I suppose, of the wise king. It is computed that since the origin of movable types, ten million volumes have been published, and that if we allow three hundred to an edition, the total is three thousand million volumes. The greatest activity in this vast output has prevailed during the last century, which has not only given to us some of our most delightful authors, such as Goethe, Schiller, Hugo, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Hawthorne, Emerson, James Russell Lowell, Whyte Melville, George Meredith, and Marion Crawford, but has cheapened in price and brought within the reach of the people the masterpieces of literature. The books highest in character are lowest in price. As the fairest things in nature, the stars, the fields, the seas, are the most familiar, and as the most indispensable kinds of food are the most abundant, so it has been

ordered that the noblest works of human genius shall be the easiest to procure. They are everywhere. The Shakespeares, Miltons, Dantes, Racines, and their companions in greatness can be purchased for a trifle, or they can be consulted and enjoyed in libraries without cost.

To form an idea of the multitude of books in the world one ought sometimes to contemplate the bewildering array of over a million on the shelves of the British Museum, or to study the publishers' lists both of Europe and America, the mere perusal of which will indicate the enormous growth of literature. If Milton could have foreseen this fecundity, he doubtless would have modified the views he expressed in the *Areopagitica* concerning the sanctity of book life. An ingenious writer in the *Saturday Review* (June 22, 1878) has this delicious estimate of the situation, — an estimate I cannot abridge without spoiling. Having alluded to the author of *Paradise Lost*, he proceeds in this entertaining style : —

"There are, we are told, causes which operate to prevent our being over-peopled, but

we can see nothing to save us from being overbooked. It was a superstition with our grandfathers that the butterman, the grocer, and the trunk-maker helped to protect society from the inundation of printed matter; but, even if the idea was ever anything more than a poetic fable, such auxiliaries would be as unavailing against the tide of literature nowadays as Mrs. Partington's besom against the Atlantic. Something, indeed, might be hoped from a commercial treaty with Japan; for the sagacious people of that country have a way of keeping literature within bounds which our boasted Western invention never thought of. In Japan there is no such thing as waste paper. A book that has ceased to be read or that never has had readers is not allowed by the practical Japanese to cumber the earth, take up space uselessly, or, worse still, furnish matter for some writer of 'padding' articles. It is transmuted into some useful form — an umbrella, or a hat, or great-coat. Nay, so manifold are the applications of papier-maché in that ingenious country, household furniture,

and even houses, so travellers tell us, are made of it. However large our annual output of literature might be, the Japanese, with such endless uses for paper, would no doubt be ready to relieve us of any quantity, and, as commercial relations extended, might perhaps return us some portion manufactured into practical shapes, just as we send cotton back to the growers in the form of shirting. Thus the novelist might come to be sheltered by his own romances, and an epic moulded into a hat protect the head within which it was born as a poem."

From these amusing suggestions we are warranted in inferring, what indeed must be apparent to gods and men, that this over-swollen stream, this inundation, so to speak, is not an unqualified blessing. Like Artemus Ward's seventeen Mormon widows who proposed to him, it is the "muchness" that discourages and depresses. It is this very abundance that gives point to Schopenhauer's cynical emphasis on "the paramount importance of acquiring the art not to read"; and it is this excess that enables us to sympathize with Atterbury in the

doleful views he expressed to Pope in a letter written in 1731 : —

" How many books have come out of late in your parts which you think I should be glad to peruse? Name them. The catalogue, I believe, will not cost you much trouble. They must be good ones indeed to challenge any part of my time, now I have so little of it left. I, who squandered whole days heretofore, now husband hours when the glass begins to run low, and care not to spend them on trifles. At the end of the lottery of life our last minutes, like tickets left in the wheel, rise in their valuation."

De Quincey, likewise, declared it to be " one of the misfortunes of life that one must read thousands of books only to discover that one need not have read them." This painful experience recalls the story of the Oriental magnate whose library was so vast as to require a thousand dromedaries to transport it. With judicious elimination of the useless and trashy it was reduced to the carrying power of some thirty beasts of burden. A similar

process, if we only knew how to perform it, would unquestionably reduce the literature of the world to a limit compassable in a diligent lifetime. The absolute necessity for discrimination is vigorously set forth by Ruskin in *Fors Clavigera*.

He declares that "the chief of all the curses of this unhappy age is the gabble of its fools, and of the flocks that follow them, rendering the quiet voices of the wise men of all time past inaudible. The first necessity for our mental government is to extricate from among the noise the few books and words that are divine. And this," he adds, "has been my main work from my youth up, not caring to speak my own words, but to discern, whether in painting or sculpture, what is eternally good and vital, and to strike away from it pitilessly what is worthless and venomous. So that now, being old and thoroughly practised in this trade, I know either of a picture, a book, or a speech, quite securely whether it is good or not, as a cheesemonger knows cheese."

And further in *Sesame and Lilies* he writes:

"Life being very short, and the quiet hours of it few, we ought to waste none of them in reading valueless books, and that valuable books should, in a civilized country, be within the reach of every one, printed in excellent form for a just price, but not in any vile, vulgar, or, by reason of smallness of type, physically injurious form at a vile price. For we none of us need many books, and those we need ought to be clearly printed on the best paper and strongly bound."

Thomas Carlyle also (*On the Choice of Books*) is eminently entitled to be heard on this point. When addressing the students of Edinburgh University, he said: —

"I do not know whether it has been sufficiently brought home to you that there are two kinds of books. When a man is reading on any kind of a subject, in most departments of books, — in all books, if you take it in a wide sense, — you will find that there is a division of good books and bad books, — there is a good kind of a book and a bad kind of a book. I am not to assume that you are all

ill acquainted with this; but I may remind you that it is a very important consideration at present. It casts aside altogether the idea that people have that if they are reading any book, that if an ignorant man is reading any book, he is doing rather better than nothing at all. I entirely call that in question. I even venture to deny it. It would be much safer and better would he have no concern with books at all than with some of them."

I have no doubt that these reflections are sound and entirely worthy of consideration, and that in view of them it must be the duty of pastors, who presumably are students, to assist their people, especially those of youthful years, to a wise selection of the best and purest in literature. In some measurable degree I am seeking to meet this obligation in this *brochure;* and while I know others are better qualified for the pleasant task, I must, to be clear in my own conscience, attempt its performance to the best of my ability.

IV.

A LEADING educator several years ago remarked in my hearing that poetry and philosophy were more closely allied than many persons supposed, and that he was persuaded the study of the former was more necessary, not to say more advantageous, than the study of the latter. Since then I have thought considerably on the subject, and I am convinced that we gain a clearer insight into the causes and motives of human action, and a truer knowledge of the soul and its workings, from the muses than from the metaphysicians.

Probably this will be considered heresy by the admirers of the objective and subjective, the conditional and unconditional, the absolute and the relative. But is it not apparent that Homer and Hesiod, supplemented by Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes, must give us a more comprehensive idea of Greek soci-

ety and of the peculiarities and susceptibilities of Greek genius than can be derived from the *Dialogues* of Plato? *The Nibelungenlied, Morte d'Arthur, The Canterbury Tales,* and similar classics can hardly fail to disclose the profoundest principles that govern the actions of individuals and nations. They not only reproduce the times, or the legends of the times, of which they wrote, but they show the innermost depths of the nature common to the race in all ages. We certainly learn more of man from Goethe than from Kant, more from Molière than Descartes, more from Burns than Dugald Stewart, and immeasurably more from Shakespeare than from Locke, Berkeley, and Lewes.

A Scotch blacksmith thus describes "metaphysics": "Twa folk disputin' thegither; he that's listenin' disna ken what he that's speakin' means, and he that's speakin' disna ken what he means himsel."

This of course is hardly a fair representation; but at least it shows that in popular esteem, philosophy is not always the most effective teacher even of itself. I do not say

this to create the impression that there is any real rivalry between philosophy and poetry. Far from it. They are allies, not enemies, and their mission is co-ordinate, not antagonistic; and it is the peculiar merit of Robert Browning that in his works we behold the two in actual fellowship.

The great charm of this wonderful author is, that without advertising his intention, he enshrines philosophy in poetry, and offers poetry as a precious sacrifice on the altar of philosophy. As he has united them in his productions, we ought not to divorce them in our reading. Ovid, Virgil, Horace, Edmund Spenser, Dryden, Tennyson, Longfellow, Bryant, Schiller, and Racine, in addition to poets already named, ought to keep company with Socrates, Aristotle, Spinoza, Cousin, Hamilton, Hegel, Fichte, Coleridge, and Emerson. This is a goodly fellowship, and like all other true fellowships mutually helpful.

Probably it will be suggested that both classes of writers are beyond the level of ordinary readers, and that it were better to

recommend more elementary works. M. Jules Simon, the eminent Frenchman, when conferring the prizes of the Philotechnic Society, had to meet this objection, and he did so in a very satisfactory manner. I give a brief extract from his speech : —

"You are learning to read poetry; the simpler it is the finer, and a fine poem will always make an impression on the public. You can see a demonstration of this in the free performances which are given once a year at the Paris theatres. I was once asked to select the programme. It was desired to give plays which might be accessible to the intellect of those who have not advanced in education. What is the best thing with which to entertain the masses? Take what is greatest in literature, and you will find that the greatest conceptions of the world's best minds will scarcely be great enough for this universal public. If you take three or four persons singly and give them Corneille and Racine, they may possibly not understand. But the people, the masses, will always understand. It is the difference

between man and mankind. The greatest effort that man can make is to represent humanity."

I agree entirely with him. Observation running through many years has taught me that it will not do to presume on the ignorance of the public. The multitudes whom the cultured view as of ordinary intelligence are those who cannot be satisfied with shallowness and mediocrity. Consequently, I only recommend the highest, the loftiest, the best in literature; for that which is the grandest and noblest will be more profoundly in harmony with human nature, and what is most in accord with human nature, that nature will, even when comparatively untaught, be able to comprehend most readily.

Nor can this fellowship with the highest be overvalued. It means a great deal, not only to readers themselves, but to the cause of literature itself, creating as it does a taste for what is refined and eminently spiritual. Witness the dawn of hope in France, that at last the old school of naturalism appears to be on the wane.

Tolstoi's dictum that "soul is a necessity," both in man and in the universe of things, is coming to be understood among men of letters in Paris, and is causing unusual sensations of joy; for it is being apprehended that the correction of public taste will bring with it a purer literature. Levisse Faquet, and especially Desjardins, are prominently representative of this movement, concerning which Madame de Berry writes in the *Contemporary:* "The tendency toward the spiritualization of thought in France is rapidly becoming universal; her men of action, in common with the men of thought, are hailing with enthusiasm the union of labor with science, of science with imagination, and of all with each in the true and hearty love of 'humanity.'"

Delille also, in the *Nineteenth Century*, is equally confident. He says: "Psychologists, symbolists, occultists, though widely divided on other points, are all united in proclaiming the downfall of naturalism." The revolt against materialism seems to be pronounced, and with it a reaction from the dominance of base ideals

and erotic fantasies. To prevent the possibility of the coming generation lapsing into the quagmire from which Frenchmen are seeking to deliver themselves, teachers of youth must persistently maintain the prior claims the master minds have on the attention of mankind.

And it would be well if in this connection the real merit of Thomas Carlyle were clearly stated, and at least a few of his books commended to the thoughtful student. What the *Christian Commonwealth* has set forth regarding his genius and work cannot be too frequently repeated: "It was moral, not physical force, he really worshipped. He held that 'the set of the Universe is just,' that good will prevail over evil. And his teaching, so different to that of his day, has certainly helped to mould English thought. In this his humor was an important agent. The two greatest curses of England, he said, were 'drink and stump oratory.' With much that is exaggerated and unwise in his writings, they will ever, as Mr. Lecky says, be distinguished from almost all others by the stress they lay on

the fact that '*the moral element*' is the deepest and most important part of our being, deeper and stronger than all intellectual conditions."

Therefore, as an educator of the taste, Carlyle will always prove invaluable. I am not here referring to style. Macaulay and Ruskin outrank him in all that pertains to the grace of composition; but in the cultivation of the taste for all that is genuine, sincere, and thoroughly honest in the realm of letters, he is, in my opinion, unmatched. Contact with his thought seems to arouse a new love for truth, and the grandeur of his own veraciousness renders every form of deceitfulness, even the most alluring, unutterably despicable. The whole trend of his influence is against the superficial, the mediocre, and the pernicious in books; and the uniformity and vigor of his testimony on this subject are such as to indicate the vast importance of young readers being encouraged to seek acquaintance with the highest and the noblest.

V.

IT is well known that not a few serious persons entertain the most uncompromising antipathy toward works of fiction. Romances, novels, and the like, to them, are little short of "the abomination that maketh desolate." They are unwilling to tolerate any such productions beneath their roof; and if they have children they are solemnly warned not even to be on speaking terms with *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, *The Scottish Chiefs*, *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, or *Robinson Crusoe*. Such creations of unsanctified imagination are not to be admitted for a moment into respectable society, especially into company that professes to be godly. And yet, with significant invariableness, as these innocent offenders are debarred from entering at the front door, childish hands

surreptitiously let down the chain and welcome them at the back gate.

Boys and girls, as a rule, do not read fewer stories because of parental prohibition, but they come to pay too dear a price for the liberty they exercise without permission; they sacrifice their ingenuousness. Moreover, indiscriminate condemnation not merely fosters deceitfulness, but frequently leads to another appalling possibility. Left to themselves and to their wayward appetites, children are as likely to acquire the habit of reading trashy, corrupting, and infamous romances as they are to form a taste for those that are good and elevating; perhaps more so. Such books are an unmitigated curse, and ought to be suppressed. They have created criminals, have saturated the mind with unpurgable filthiness, and have led to unspeakable orgies and vices. Penitentiaries and insane asylums witness to the fatal power of these devilish agencies published in flaring colors, with flashy titles and for trifling charges. They are at times displayed with painted candies in small stores, and

make up part of the poisoned commodities retailed to the unsuspecting. Teachers occasionally find them secreted in desks at school; and parents, after the lapse of years, will often discover them carefully hidden in lumber closets or behind heavy articles of furniture, — the tardy explanation of wilfulness, waywardness, and downright wickedness.

To avert so serious a calamity it is far better for the guardians of youth to tolerate, if nothing more, the stories of Goldsmith, Hawthorne, Washington Irving, Count Tolstoi, — not all of them, though, — Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Canon Kingsley, Thackeray, Walter Scott, and others of similar excellence. By such wholesome food the taste for carrion may happily be aborted.

It may be, however, that some scrupulously conscientious people will object that they ought not to do even modified evil that a greater evil may be prevented; for it is not to be denied that in some instances the opposition lies directly against fiction as fiction, whatever may be its character. I am not sure that any

words of mine would influence these inveterate conservatives; but in the interests of the young who may peruse these pages their misconception ought to be exposed and the weakness of their position made apparent.

Evidently these haters of novel reading assume that all fiction is necessarily false. That is the meaning they attach to the word, and they do not take pains to ascertain whether they are correct in their interpretation or not. Well, the truth of the matter is that the word "fiction" is derived from *fingere*, and primarily signifies "to frame or to fashion." It is not denied that in the secondary sense the word denotes what is imagined or feigned; but it does not invariably or necessarily suggest that which is unreal, or unnatural, or untrue. And this leads me to a very important question, and opens a fresh department of our general subject.

The friends who strenuously denounce novels are usually equally strenuous in advocating historical studies. But is history always veracious? If fiction should not be read because it con-

tains more imagination than fact, is it possible consistently to defend the reading of history? And if it is, whose history is thus entitled to our confidence? Shall we follow Froude, or his uncompromising critic, Freeman? Hume, it is said, wrote for the Whigs and the sceptics, and Macaulay for the present era; and it is asserted by candid reviewers that both were unable to escape from their bias and prejudice.

Green's *History of the English People* is a notable volume; but how can we believe what he has written if such an author as Dr. Lingard, who was quite an authority forty years ago, is to be credited? Take an account of the Reformation penned by a Romanist and another account by a Protestant, and one would hardly suppose that the same period and the same events were described by these writers. When the court of Queen Mary is set forth as a model for any Christian princess, while that of Elizabeth is portrayed as a den of wickedness, and when Milton is referred to as a bad man, and Benjamin Franklin as "a great instigator of rebellion," is the book that contains these

misrepresentations to be considered as more entitled to our attention and less pernicious than Swift's *Gulliver's Travels?* (See Rev. J. M. Neale's *History for Children.*)

I have no desire to destroy the respect of my young friends for historians. But in justice to them I must impress on their mind the fact that all so-called history is not true, and all fiction is not false. Wherever humanity is reproduced as it really is, and wherever its aims, motives, laws, are disclosed in action, though the framework, scheme, or plot may be imaginary, the heart and substance of the book are true. *Les Miserables* and *Ninety-three* by Victor Hugo, and *Westward Ho!* and *Hypatia* by Kingsley, are more essentially veracious than Dickens's *History of England,* or even Michelet's *History of France,* excellent and inspiring as the latter volume undoubtedly is.

Sir Philip Sidney admirably expresses the purpose and value of that class of literature which has been dealt with so unreasonably by extreme religionists: "The dealer in fiction cometh unto you with a tale which holdeth

children from play, and old men from the chimney corner; and pretending no more doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue, even as the child is often brought to take most wholesome things by hiding them in such as have a pleasant taste; which, if one tell them the nature of the aloes and the rhubarbarum they should receive, they would sooner take their physic at their ears than at their mouth." This is a fair statement of the case.

The highest fiction, that which deserves to be read, is merely an attractive and sufficient medium for the transmission of truth, just as the subtle ether is affirmed by certain scientists to be the medium for the transmission of light from the sun to our globe. As such it is not to be condemned in wholesale fashion, neither ought it to be withheld from those who can be directly benefited by its manifold charms.

From what has been said it will doubtless have been inferred that history and fiction are not much farther apart than philosophy and poetry. While in a sense they certainly are

not entire strangers to each other, history, with all of its faults, outranks fiction and is worthy of the most ardent endeavors to master its content. No man's education is complete without the careful reading of Herodotus, Xenophon, Thucydides, Tacitus, Grote's *Greece*, Gibbon's *Rome*, Guizot's *France*, Bancroft's *America*, and the other volumes already mentioned in this connection. Nor ought such books as Schlegel's *Philosophy of History*, and Hegel's work under the same title, to be neglected by any person who desires to understand the principles underlying what Carlyle terms "the record of remarkable actions." It is not probable that discussions as profound as those last named will have any special attractions for beginners. I have referred to them rather as a kind of climax to such studies than as an introduction. Indeed, my own opinion is that it is better, so to speak, for the youth to wade from the present up the stream of time to its source, instead of beginning his labors at the alleged fountain head in the garden of Eden. Let him, first of all, read

the history of his own country, say for a hundred years, and then read that of contemporaneous nations during the same period. Then let him inquire, how came this age to be as it is? The question will carry him back to the preceding century for its answer; and so on, seeking in scientific fashion for an explanation of every epoch and era, until he reaches the dawn of history. His philosophy will likely grow with his knowledge, and in the end he may come to realize with Froude "that the world is somehow built on moral foundations; that in the long run it is well with the good, in the long run it is ill with the wicked."

I desire likewise to recommend: *History of America* by Justin Winsor, and by the same author, also, *Christopher Columbus; The Discovery of America*, by John Fiske; and *The Constitutional and Political History of the United States*, by Dr. H. von Holst.

VI.

AN important means of comprehending the significance of the annals of the race is supplied by biography. I have now for many years associated each division of history with the life of some prominent personage, and have grouped around him all the facts I could gather; and in this way the mention of his name recalls all that I know of his times and environments. Dates, I find, are more easily remembered by connecting them with the career of a famous leader than by any other process familiar to me.

What varied panoramas of events, for instance, follow the mere introduction of the illustrious individuals whom Taine brings together in a single paragraph, though they were separated from each other by many years and by differing circumstances! "Augustus,"

he says, "divided the world with Lepidus and Anthony, then killed Anthony to have it all his own. Charlemagne placed his brother Carloman in a cloister, and to destroy Witikind cut off the head of all Saxons longer than his sword. Louis XI. revolted against his father to dethrone him, and made Charles VII. so dread poison that he died of starvation. Richelieu formed plots and had them executed at the block in the *Place de Greve*. Mazarine signed a treaty with the Protector and drove Charles II. from France. These are noted rulers, and yet betrayers of the right." Each of these great chieftains suggests at once the civilizations, movements, conspiracies, and conflicts with which he was related, and the restoration of his features in some degree necessitates the reconstruction of his age.

But independent of its value as a key to history, biography has a worth all its own as an exposition of human nature and as an inspiration to the highest achievements. Who can forget the impression made on his mind by the reading of Plutarch's *Lives*, a book of

the largest information and of the most stimulating qualities? It not only deals with ancient heroes, but it has made heroes. I have no doubt that other volumes of a similar kind have been the real parents of many of the noblest characters that have appeared on the stage of time.

It is impossible to compute the influence of Carlyle's *Oliver Cromwell,* or even Boswell's *Johnson,* a very different book indeed, and with a very different hero. Such works place us on terms of fellowship with giant minds and gentle hearts, and at once humble and exalt us. They humble, by making sadly apparent our own deficiencies, and they exalt by reminding us that we belong to the race which is continually producing men of glorious genius.

Froude laments that with the decline of the Catholic Church, worthy biographies are becoming rare and may become impossible. This he attributes to the change in the world's ruling ideal, self-sacrifice being supplanted by a spirit altogether too mercenary for successful biography. I dissent fundamentally from his

views entirely. The *Lives of the Saints*, to which he alludes in illustration of what he deplores, is in my opinion too fanciful, too artificial and absurd in its portraitures for it to be of any real value. Its very unnaturalness rules it out, to a great degree, from the sphere of practical utility. I would as soon recommend the life of Aladdin or of Sindbad the Sailor as a model of biography, as I would that of St. Patrick or of St. Bridget as revised and edited and authorized by an infallible church.

To show that Mr. Froude is not justified in his grief, I may be allowed to mention Köstlin's *Luther*, Lockhart's *Walter Scott*, Mrs. Oliphant's *Edward Irving*, and various stimulating volumes on Livingstone, Carey, and Judson, not forgetting several autobiographies like those from the pen of Goethe, Hugh Miller, and Gen. Grant. These and similar books are a rebuke to the mediævalism of Mr. Froude, and their perusal must convince that all ages, and ours none the less than others, are about equally prolific in men of varying types of personal greatness. Essays

and lectures are to be particularly prized when they contribute to this impression. While I esteem articles on various other subjects, I cannot but feel a peculiar interest in those which are devoted to celebrated characters. In my judgment they must always possess an overmastering charm for youthful readers. Take as samples Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*, also his essays on *Goethe*, *Novalis*, *Richter*, and *Burns*; likewise what Macaulay has written on *Milton* and *Bunyan*, and what James Sterling has penned on *Douglas Jerrold*, *Tennyson*, and *Elliott*, and Edmond Scherer on *John Stuart Mill*, *Laurence Sterne*, and *Wordsworth*. These papers are comparatively brief, and bring us at once into touch with the genius of their subjects and into sympathy with them in their vicissitudes. We become familiar with their moods, their ambitions, and disappointments; and in the eloquent words of an obscure author, we hear them as "they beat up the thunder from the hard highway," and we listen to their "melodies which drop down into the soul like the tears of music."

Of Ebenezer Elliott it was written by Searle: "He would utter the finest things one after another, with the throat of Ætna; scattering them about in blasts of fire and thunder. He was a sort of walking earthquake, clad in flowers and rainbows; one of the most beautiful and terrible of men." By the aid of biography, we recognize our brotherhood with such serene and tempestuous characters, and storm with them and smile with them, and learn from them innumerable lessons of perseverance and patience. And at last, when tired and worn as they were with the conflict, still inspired by their example, we come softly to sing: —

"Brothers, I have done my best;
I am weary, let me rest.
Let me rest, but lay me low,
Where the hedge-side roses blow;
Where the winds a-Maying go;
Where the little daisies grow."

VII.

IT is usually supposed that religion and science have so little in common that books on these respective themes must be rather antagonistic than supplemental to each other. Such, however, is not necessarily the case. There are volumes on religious subjects that are eminently scientific in method and treatment, and there are volumes on science that are surprisingly religious in spirit and reverence. Messengers these that seem to call us

> "To that cathedral boundless as our wonder,
> Whose quenchless lamps the sun and moon supply;
> Its choir the winds and waves, its organ thunder,
> Its dome the sky."

As a matter of fact, are not the two domains very intimately allied, almost as close, indeed, as the water and the atmosphere in nature? "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork," . . .

"and the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." He has embodied his thought in the splendid symbolism of the stars, and in the hieroglyphics of the rocks and hills, as well as in letters, words, and sentences.

The inquirer must ever fall short of everything like adequate knowledge of God who is neglectful of either divinely appointed repository of truth; and the literature that assists him to penetrate both must be equally welcome and must be equally entitled to consideration.

It is hardly necessary to say that there are volumes devoted to the exposition of the physical universe whose violent opposition to Christianity constitutes a most fatal defect.

Such books are scientific in their treatment of everything, excepting religion. They deal with that as though it were an idle fabrication, or at best as an overgrown child that has reached the proportions of a giant with only the intellect of a simpleton. It is not necessary that I mention the titles of these one-sided treatises. They are pretty thoroughly

advertised, and I prefer not to give them further publicity. But it is perhaps fair that I should say I do not include in the list Darwin or Tyndall; for while there is on the part of neither an acceptance of Christian truths, and particularly on the part of the latter at times something like mocking hostility, they are both so manifestly honest, so thoughtful and eloquent, that in spite of specific denials, they carry us into a region higher and sublimer than that of mere physics. Especially those passages in the *Origin of Species* where the great evolutionist concedes that his theory does not supersede the necessity for the Divine Being to give the primal forms or form from whence this varied universe has sprung, and those in *Scientific Materialism* that confess "the passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness" to be "unthinkable," and that declare "molecular groupings and molecular motions" to be very far from explaining anything, both in letter and spirit tend to reverence, awe, and devoutness in the mind of the reader. Mr.

George Lewes, in *The Forthnightly*, complained that there are men of culture who regard science with a vague dread which expresses itself in a dislike, sometimes sharpened into hatred. There is no accounting at times for prejudices. It is reported of Arnold of Rugby that he could not endure Livy, and that, having accidentally visited the birthplace of the Roman, he congratulated himself on his escape from an atmosphere which he had breathed. Christian people are not always above such singular aversions. But they ought to be overcome. They are fruitful of no blessings. There is good in everything; even in the Indian jungle rare and delicate plants are found. Much more is this true of science. It is prolific in benefits, even though there may be much of the swamp and the miasma about it. Let the religious Demosthenes warn the church, if he must, against the encroachments of this stern Philip; but let him deal more fairly by Philip than the Athenian did. The world is large enough, there is room enough for both, and they can be sufficiently helpful to each

other for them to be mutually respectful and sympathetic. It is related of one Leo of Byzantium, that when at Athens he said to the people, though his wife was a small woman, the city where they lived was not big enough to contain the two. Alas! for Leo! Alas! for Mrs. Leo! Thus the advocates of science sometimes sneer at religion, disparaging its moral magnitude; and they, in their turn, are treated in a similar way by the devotees of faith. Byzantium, consequently, is straitened to contain them. But it will be otherwise if they will only learn justice, candor, and charity. Then they will revere each other, and, though differing, will appreciate each other's labors in behalf of human advancement.

But if some scientific works are unfavorable to religion, there are some religious books, or at least books so called, that are equally disastrous to the cause they aim to interpret and defend. Christianity may well pray to be delivered from some of its professed friends in type. Trashy sentimentalism, unnatural precocious piety, superstitious scrupulousness,

ascetic and withal superficial casuistry, combined with gross, carnal, and almost melodramatic conceptions of Redemption, make up very unwholesome pabulum on which to nourish the spiritual life.

An extreme example of this style of literature is furnished in an old work especially designed for children, entitled *Virtue and Vice; or, The History of Charles Careful and Harry Heedless.* The learned author designs his heroes to act respectively as illustrations of the proverbial good and bad boys. Of course the former youth always sought advice, imitated his seniors, never climbed trees, nor fell in ditches, nor hunted birds' nests, never made mud pies, never holloed on the streets, never coasted down a hill, and loved sermons, gave his pocket money to beggars, and occasioned no one any solicitude nor anxiety. An angelic, though wingless, lad! Naturally he became very rich, and rode in his own carriage. They always do, these denizens of Paradise. Why not? Is it necessary to say that Master Heedless was just the opposite of this para-

gon? He was untamably and incorrigibly wicked. He *did* climb trees, tear his garments, fall in muddy ditches, run away from school, and act in a wildly tempestuous manner; and properly enough lost his money and had to be saved from penury by the hand of Charles Careful. Both characters, as they are portrayed, seem to me equally preposterous and impossible, and the moral of the story vicious and misleading; for in spite of thin disguises, it merely extols the huckstering virtues that are akin to vices, and once more converts the temple of God into a den of thieves.

Other specimens of this precious literature I could easily give, but am deterred by the fact that their contents cannot be described without appearing to border on the profane. But as I recall what my vocation has unhappily compelled me to examine, with John Stuart Mill I regard such volumes as a poor substitute for old romances, whether of chivalry or fairy, which if not veritable pictures of actual life, were not false ones; but, far better, since they

filled the youthful imagination with ideals of heroic men and heroic women.

No one can afford to waste time on publications issued in the name of Christ, if they are of doubtful value. If he is to be spiritually benefited he must seek the best, and I am grateful to say that the list of the best is too long for it to be given here. All I can do is to call attention to some works without which a religious library is incomplete, not to furnish a catalogue comprehensive and exhaustive. Among the most important I place Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, Bushnell's *Natural and Supernatural*, Drummond's *Spiritual Law in the Natural World*, Rogers's *Origin of Scriptures*, Geikie's *Hours with the Bible*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, Luther's *Table Talk*, Pascal's *Pensées*, Pusey's *Augustine*, Wake's *Apostolic Fathers*, Epictetus' *Enchiridion*, Aristotle's *Ethics*, Keble's *Christian Year*, Heine's *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, James Freeman Clarke's *Ten Great Religions*, Arnold's *Light of Asia* and

Light of the World, Wilkinson's *Epic of Saul*, Vaughan's *Mystics*, and last, though not least, Ruskin's *Lives of the Painters*.

Concerning the latter, it may be said that it is not a work on religion and ought not to be classed with books of that character. I know well enough its scope, and have classed it as I have, because of the devout and thoroughly religious temper by which it is distinguished. Mr. Ruskin has been termed "the homilist of art"; and of him it has been declared that he "preaches a sermon in every page, and preaches without knowing it." Likewise "it is asserted that Henry Ward Beecher saturated his mind with Mr. Ruskin's writings; and that the mixture of classical erudition with positive adoration of the Bible gives to his art of criticism a sublimity which is altogether unapproached by others." One, therefore, who masters his marvellous productions will find himself not only enriched in the knowledge of art, but in spiritual experiences as well.

As it is of the gravest moment, life being as short as it is, that only religious classics should

be read, it is also important that second-rate works on science should be avoided. Technical books I do not refer to in this department as I have not spoken of them in any other, and as I am not recommending text-books, but only those suitable for general, though accurate information. Among them I name some of those I am myself familiar with, such as Humboldt's *Cosmos* and *Travels*, Bacon's *Novum Organum*, Wallace's *Natural Selection*, Mivart's *Lessons from Nature*, Gray's *Natural Science and Religion*, Hugh Miller's *Testimony of Rocks*, Winchell's *Sketches of Creation*, Youmans's *Correlation and Conservation of Force*, and the various volumes from the pen of Darwin and Haeckel.

Up to the present I have narrowed the application of the term "science." I have restricted it thus far exclusively to the interpretations of nature and of natural laws; but it embraces a wider range. There is a science of society as well as of the universe, and as exact in its principles as any other, were our induction of facts comprehensive enough for us

to determine their real bearing and significance. Moreover, in this special field of inquiry it is not easy to say where sociology ends and theology begins, and indeed it is growing more and more difficult to permanently divorce them from each other. They are mutual helps.

The business of religion is to perfect society, and the business of sociology, practically if not theoretically, is to furnish the best conditions for the advancement of religion. Poverty, distress, outrage, oppression, and chronic wretchedness and despair have always impeded the progress of Christianity, and apart from Christianity these evils are stubborn and ineradicable. Of late more attention has been given in communities to the amelioration of humanity than ever in the past, and leaders are beginning to believe what Epictetus said to his own age in the dusty past: "You will do the greatest service to the state if you shall raise, not the roofs of the houses, but the souls of the citizens: for it is better that great souls should dwell in small houses rather than for mean slaves to lurk in great houses."

Unless I greatly mistake the signs of the times, we are on the eve of a social revolution, and the men of to-morrow will undoubtedly determine its scope and its spirit. How imperative, then, is it that the youth of to-day should not be ignorant of what is being said or written about existing evils, and the proposed organization of industry! Most earnestly do I commend Herbert Spencer's *Study in Sociology* and *Man versus the State*, Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*, Rogers's *Economic Interpretation of History*, Mallock's *Inequalities of Society*, Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*, Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, Thomas H. Benton's *Thirty Years in United States Senate*, James G. Blaine's *Twenty Years in Congress*, George Jacob Holyoake's *Co-operation*, and the *Fabian Essays*. These are only a few of the books now pouring forth like a cataract on the world, which reveal something of the drift and dangers of the present hour, and that, directly or indirectly, disclose the functions and limitations of government, and suggest plans for the per-

manent improvement and betterment of society; and these ought to be carefully perused, and a thorough acquaintance with the problems and the legislation of our times be earnestly sought. The present spasm of anarchy in Europe, which is causing so much anxiety, cannot in the nature of things effect any beneficial changes. Not dynamite, but intelligence, is the hope of the world; not brutality, but reason, shall determine the reforms of the future. Books are more potent than bullets in righting wrongs and slaying oppressions. Only as they are understood, and only as they create a large view of humanity and its needs, and only as they shall inspire in the direction of peaceful and practical endeavors, will the new generation thrill to the voice of the poet as he calls: —

"Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind."

VIII.

LORD BROUGHAM is reported to have said, "that it is well to read everything of something, and something of everything." But to do this the taste must be cultivated, and the inestimable worth of literature must be duly appreciated. Dick Steele wrote in the *Tatler, 147:* "Reading should be to the mind what exercise is to the body, bringing pleasure with health and strength." The pleasure is an important element. If we have not so corrected our crude desires as to find more delight in good and instructive volumes than in the lust of the eye and the pride of life, we shall profit but little by the wisdom either of ancients or moderns. Macaulay is reported to have found more enjoyment in the company of Sterne, Fielding, Horace Walpole, and Boswell, than in the

society of the greatest living wits of his day. Gibbon has been heard to say that "he would not exchange his love of reading for all the treasures of India."

And Sir John Herschel placed on record these stirring sentiments on the same subject: "If I were to pray for a taste which should stand me in stead under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me through life, and a shield against its ills, however things might go amiss and the world frown upon me, it would be a taste for reading. I speak of it of course only as a worldly advantage, and not in the slightest degree as superseding or derogating from the higher office and surer and stronger panoply of religious principles, but as a taste, an instrument, and a mode of pleasurable gratification. Give a man this taste and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making a happy man, unless, indeed, you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books."

To realize the desire of the famous astron-

omer, and to so discipline and refine the mind that it shall readily discern what is worthy in the world of letters, it is important that due attention be given to works more or less expository and critical in their scope. Familiarity with the history of literature, a knowledge of the rank attained by particular men of genius, an idea of the estimate in which they are held by cultured and competent judges, and some conception of what passages in their writings are generally admitted to be gems and masterpieces, are elements of an education incomparably valuable and dignified. Helps in this direction are numerous, and I refer only to a few of those that have been of service to me in my intellectual life, especially during my later years, and which cannot be studied without distinct advantage on the part of all who desire to acquire the ability of intelligently discriminating in the choice of books. I am personally indebted to Sismonde's *Literature of Europe*, to Schlegel's *Æsthetics*, Schiller's *Essays*, Fenton's *Greece*, Taine's *English*

Literature, and to Van Laun's *French Literature*. Likewise I have read with profit *Literary Workers* by Hargreaves, *The Story of Some Famous Books* by Sanders, *The Pleasures of Literature* — English volume, but author's name forgotten, a clerical book-borrower, who preaches "thou shalt not steal," having failed to return it — ah me! — *On Shakespeare* by Gervinus, *Origin and Philosophy of Language* by John Walsh, and an *English Literature* by the same pen. These productions, thoughtfully perused, can hardly fail to develop a taste for what is best in prose and poetry. And if further assistance be craved, I refer the inquirer to the bibliography contained in Sir John Lubbock's *Pleasures of Life*, a useful though only a sketchy book, and to the bibliography published in *A Club of One*, by A. P. Russell, a witty and clever production in every way, and one that has furnished several of the references incorporated in the present treatise. Even the mere names of the authors cited in these lists and catalogues are of value to

the student, as revealing to him who the master minds are at whose feet he is to sit, and from whose lips he is to learn wisdom. They indicate at least what he ought to admire and what he ought to shun, and with the aid of such helps, drilled in the appreciation of true genius, he may hope to be capable of enjoying the grandest and worthiest achievements of the mind. This, however, is not the work of a day or of a mere nodding acquaintance with leading writers.

But assuming that in some slight degree this taste has been created, there arises the very practical question, not easily answered either, how shall it be satisfied, and yet grow on what it feeds? In other words, how shall we read? What method is the best, what rules are most entitled to our confidence? Goethe says that for eighteen years he had tried to define and acquire this art, and had not been remarkably successful. And Richter, in similar perplexity, inquires: "Does more depend on the order in which the meats follow each other or on the digestion of them?" Who can tell?

Even in the assimilation of food, ice cream logically seems to follow soup and meats, and if taken at too early a stage in the proceedings might seriously disturb the functions of nature.

Authoritative directions are manifestly difficult to frame, especially as minds differ and stubbornly refuse to be worked in each other's harness; trifling suggestions are numerous and harmless enough, but less valuable than their authors suppose.

In my own case, I usually read the table of contents first, then the preface, and then the last chapter of the book, especially if it be a novel, or from an unknown pen; for what is the use of going all through the volume, if the climax is stupid, foolish, or impossible? If the writer buries all his heroes at the close, why should I burden my brain with the wearisome task of following fortunes that lead to so obvious and funereal an end? Then I generally mark passages in the books I read, express my opinion in marginal notes of the style and sentiments in a manner highly creditable to my candor if not to my charity. Moreover,

I frequently make an index of my own on the blank pages which the publishers conveniently line the covers with, and by consulting it can easily refresh my mind as to what I regard as brilliant and worth remembering.

I likewise aim to distribute my reading, by a mental process pigeon-holing it so to speak, assigning what pertains to the department of poetry, or philosophy, or religion, or science, or history, as the case may require. But I am all too conscious of the defects of my own system, if system it may be called, to enjoin it on others. What assists me might hinder my neighbors, and my neighbors' plans might prove a fatal stumbling-block to me. Every one must carefully feel his way to his own method, and if he is in earnest he will ultimately evolve one that will at least serve him as a pair of crutches, even if it cannot do duty as wings.

But though I am diffident as to the formulating of specific rules, there are several precautions I venture to make. And the first is, avoid aimlessness and irreverence in reading.

Be sure to have a purpose, and let it be approached with becoming gravity. Machiavelli when visiting in the country writes to Vittori as to his pursuits in field and garden, and then adds: "When evening comes I return home, and shut myself up in my study. Before I make my appearance in it, I take off my rustic garb, soiled with mud and dirt, and put on a dress adapted for courts or cities; thus fitly habited I enter the antique resorts of the ancients; where being received, I feed on that food which alone is mine, and for which I was born. For an interval of four hours I feel no annoyance; I forget every grief, I neither fear poverty nor death, but am totally immersed."

In this adorning of the outward person there is a fine touch of respect for the authors he desires to meet, and a just recognition of the worthy benefits they confer. While of course it would be absurd to recommend my young friends to put on full dress when they hold fellowship with books, it is not too much to urge on them a suitable preparation of mind for the interview. The body may be in rags,

but the mind should be in courtier garb; the head may be covered, but the soul should be in an attitude of homage.

To read profitably one needs something of the gentle tolerance of Sainte-Beuve, something of the intuition of Hazlitt, something of the sympathy of Lamb, something of the analytic power of Spencer, and above all, much of the profound veneration that distinguishes Ruskin and Carlyle. There are many persons who are strangers to such feelings. They would take off their hats on entering a mortuary chapel and show due respect to a vault where rests the mighty dead, but no kindred emotion is kindled in the presence of what remains entombed in noble volumes of the genius that thrilled and delighted other ages. And yet, reverence is as surely becoming in the one case as the other. Nevertheless, in a multitude of instances the book is taken up carelessly, perused in flippant mood, and without any particular aim or purpose, unless that be called purpose which merely seeks an hour's diversion. It is as though you were to saun-

ter into the drawing-room of a cultivated lady, trifle with the bric-a-brac, and at last say to your hostess that you did not call to see her, have no particular or remote interest in her, and rejoice that you can now be happily released from her uninteresting presence.

To correct this deplorable defect, it is necessary that the young man form an adequate idea of the true value of reading, that he keep steadily before him what its real object is, and never lose sight of it when he settles himself down to work in his modest library. Montaigne says: "The principal use of reading to me is that, by various objects, it rouses my reason; it employs my judgment, not my memory."

But though it does not tax the memory at the time, it will enrich it if there is serious attention; that is, reverence for the business in hand. Some one has declared "that the chief end of all reading in a world like this should be action." Probably he is correct; though I hold another opinion, or rather a modification of this opinion. While undoubt-

edly it ought to equip us, and show us how to do things, and inspire us to the doing, it ought to nourish our intellectual life, and preserve us from mental sloth and degeneracy.

Wholesome reading is a kind of gymnasium for the generation of strengh, an armory for the exercise of arms, and a royal banquet for the assimilation of choicest viands. At times, it must be confessed, these ends are lost sight of, and books serve a purpose similar to that which is attained by the use of tobacco and opium. They are not employed for purposes of nutrition, but rather for excitement or for the enjoyment of intellectual drunkenness. This species of smoking is going on all around us. It induces oblivion, and produces neither enlightenment nor energy. This literary opium habit is fatal to truthfulness, honesty, and to other qualities indispensable to high mental attainments, and is precursor to the entire prostration of memory and the power of reflection. Without reverence or seriousness, how can it be otherwise than that there should be aimlessness, or even what is worse, a mere

morbid craving for condiments and stimulants? And in such sad examples, we have an illustration of the truth of Milton's reproach: —

"The man who reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
(And what he brings why need he elsewhere seek?)
Uncertain and unsettled still remains.
Deep versed in books, but shallow in himself,
Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys
And trifles for choice matters, worth a sponge,
As children gather pebbles by the shore."

IX.

I SUGGEST another precaution: avoid immoderateness and superficialness in reading. Be careful not to go too fast or attempt too much. Remember that excess of fuel will sometimes extinguish the fire, and that the flame of our own thought may be smothered and quenched by too great avidity to receive the thoughts of others. The more extended the landscape, as a rule, the less distinct its particular features, and the wider our survey of literature the less likely will we be to note its individual charms.

"I have been round the world with Captain Cook," said an intelligent sailor to an expectant company that had gathered to hear his marvels of travel, "and all that I saw was the sky above me, and the water beneath me." Those two expanses were so vast that they

dwarfed into invisibility every other object. The eye was so pained by the effort to compass these boundaries that it was blind to many minute attractions that came within its range.

Let us be on our guard, or we may miss possession of substantial wealth by our unwise rapaciousness. The danger is great. Time was when this was a bookless globe, but nowadays we have literature, such as it is, in abundance. Multitudes of newspapers print each morning the good and bad things said and done the day before, and tracts, pamphlets, and magazines are multiplied beyond calculation. What may fittingly be termed "railway literature," that which can be disposed of at a steam-engine's rate of speed, and that condenses a science, a biography, a philosophy within the narrow limits of a magazine article, has grown immeasurably. These publications "make mincemeat of leviathan, and distribute soup to the indigent, made of the bones and sinews of behemoth. They hash up with sippets and sauce, to suit the taste of the indolent, the bodies of the old giants of history." (See *Minor Moralities.*)

The mischief of the present tendency is that the public obtains a smattering of many things, and rarely has accurate knowledge of anything; and has come to entertain a very fallacious belief in its own omniscience. Though information is gained in many instances from reviews, or from sources certainly not original, higher criticism having been gleaned second-hand from *Robert Elsmere*, and history been derived from Sir Walter Scott, Miss Muloch, or Alexandre Dumas, there is an affectation of culture that would be ridiculous were it not for the evident sincerity of the individuals who have so completely deceived themselves.

But if magazines are in part responsible for the prevailing shallowness, some of our popular reading clubs are not entirely clear of blame. These institutions are usually designed to promote more thorough study of various authors, such as Shakespeare, Browning, and Dante, and in not a few instances are remarkably useful; but they are not unalloyed blessings. Frequently they attempt too much and work too superficially. In a city that shall be name-

less, a lady called on me to assist her in preparing a paper on Egyptian Animal Worship. The conversation led me naturally to interrogate her as to the aims of her club, and finally elicited from her a statement of what the members attempted at a single meeting. The programme, running through an hour and a half, embraced a ten minutes' review of the origin of Greek art, a five minutes' talk on the genius of Michael Angelo, fifteen minutes to Egyptian worship, with the rest of the time divided between Socialism, Emerson, and Froebel.

This hodgepodge, this *olla podrida* of literature, like some *table d'hôte* dinners in Europe, may be excellent for diversion, but must prove altogether too scrappy for nourishment. This probably is an extreme case of club cramming; but it opens up the question concerning the real value of guilds and associations for purposes of reading. Subtract the time necessary to go to and come from such gatherings, and the time spent in ordinary social proprieties, and then determine whether the gain derived

from the speakers is such as greatly to outweigh the gain you would receive from the same number of hours spent by yourself alone with your books. This will doubtless depend on the character of the gentlemen who are the leading interpreters of the authors studied.

If they are of the mental calibre of Prof. W. T. Harris, or Prof. D. Snyder, or Prof. Davidson, or Mr. Frotheringham, the compensation received will doubtless be adequate; but if they are ordinary men, men of platitude, meagre in genius and mediocre in scholarship, the return will certainly not pay for the investment.

Moreover, there is a danger that the *habitué* of such reading circles will come to lose his own individuality, and his ability to judge for himself. Deferring to the opinions of others, especially of men eminent in letters, he may come to question his right to an opinion of his own. What was sought at first as a help may become a hindrance; what was desired as an aid to thoroughness may in the end prove a temptation to superficiality. If our so-called

helpers unfit us to form an independent estimate of what we read, and if we must have everything interpreted for us before we presume to understand anything, then we have sold ourselves into bondage, and, I am afraid, to use a Scripture statement, that our "last estate is worse than the first."

X.

PERMIT me likewise to remind you, that the end of reading is to obtain a thorough insight into an author's meaning, into his motive, and almost into his very soul. The mind must be concentrated on the page, it must dive into it and not skim over it, and if I may dare pursue the image further, bathe in it and be immersed and overwhelmed. There must be receptiveness, meditation, and assimilation. There are books that should be read line by line, with a settled determination to obtain from each a clear impression and a definite conception. They ought to be mastered slowly, as slowly and painfully as a great work of art is produced by the brush or chisel.

What such painstaking and plodding devotion to excellence means is happily illustrated by an incident in the life of a remarkable man, related in a current periodical.

When Samuel F. B. Morse, afterwards famous

as the inventor of the electric telegraph, was a young painter studying in London, he made a drawing from a small cast of the Farnese Hercules, intending to offer it to Benjamin West as an example of his work.

Being very anxious for the favorable opinion of the master, he spent a fortnight upon the drawing, and thought he had made it perfect.

When Mr. West saw the drawing he examined it critically, commended it in this and that particular, then handed it back, saying, "Very well, sir, very well; go on and finish it."

"But it *is* finished," said the young artist.

"Oh, no!" said Mr. West; "look here, and here, and here," and he put his finger upon various unfinished places.

Mr. Morse saw the defects, now that they were pointed out to him, and devoted another week to remedying them. Then he carried the drawing again to the master. Mr. West was evidently much pleased, and lavished praises upon the work; but at the end he handed it back, and said, as before, "Very well, indeed, sir; go on and finish it."

68

"Is it not finished?" asked Mr. Morse, by this time all but discouraged.

"Not yet; you have not marked that muscle, nor the articulations of the finger-joints."

The student once more took the drawing home, and spent several days in retouching it. He would have it done this time.

But the critic was not yet satisfied. The work was good, "very good, indeed; remarkably clever"; but it needed to be "finished."

"I cannot finish it," said Mr. Morse, in despair.

"Well," answered Mr. West, "I have tried you long enough. You have learned more by this drawing than you would have accomplished in double the time by a dozen half-finished drawings. It is not numerous drawings, but the character of one that makes a thorough draughtsman. *Finish* one picture, sir, and you are a painter."

Read a masterpiece of literature in this spirit, the mind constantly returning to it, like sunbeams returning after the brief eclipse of clouds to the flowers, still dissatisfied and still seeking

new beauties, and it is wonderful how much of sweetness, how much of charm and grace will reward persistence. Return to the beginning when you have reached the end. Think your way through it, like Stanley "blazing" a path through the forests of darkest Africa, and then retraverse the highway you have already trodden. Let this be repeated until one great book has been made your own, and the conquest of the second will be none the less complete, but it will be accomplished with more facility; and a worthy habit being thus established, you will be able to compass the fair fields of literature with ever-increasing ease and profit.

A passage from the *Excursion* by Wordsworth, with elevated and stately measure emphasizes and illuminates the view to which I have here given expression: —

"So passed the time; yet to the nearest town
He daily went with what small overplus
His earnings might supply, and brought away
The book that most had tempted his desires,
While at the stall he read. Among he hills
He gazed upon that mighty orb of song,
The divine Milton.

. . . . . .

So the foundations of his mind were laid
In such communion, not from terror free.
While yet a child, and long before his time,
Had he perceived the presence and the power
Of greatness; and deep feelings had impressed
Great objects in his mind, with portraiture
And color so distinct, that in his mind
They lay like substances, and almost seemed
To haunt the bodily sense. He had received
A precious gift; for as he grew in years
With these impressions, he would still compare
All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms;
And being still unsatisfied with aught
Of dimmer character, he thence attained
An active power to fasten images
Upon his brain; and on their pictured lines
Intensely brooded, even till they acquired
The liveliness of dreams."

Some men of genius have been described as deriving their inspiration from one great author in particular. Their triumphs have been credited to the wonderful influence exerted over them of writers like Homer, Kant, or Adam Smith. In these cases, like Wordsworth's hero, they have surrendered the mind unreservedly and intently to a supreme and overmastering intellect. They have scarcely admitted a rival to their love and admiration. They have pored over his

pages, analyzed his forms of speech, noted his peculiarities of composition, and pondered his habits of thought, until they have been joined to him as in spiritual marriage, and from the union there has sprung new children of the soul to enlighten and bless mankind. But whether the effect of such concentration on the charms and virtues of a single author prove in any degree prolific in fresh creations or not, the advantage of it in the way of mental discipline cannot be overestimated. Conquer the volume in hand, subdue it, make it tributary to your own growth, and the time and labor thus bestowed will never be regretted. Remember that a few good books, thoroughly and understandingly read, must yield more real profit and genuine intellectual increment than a multitude pursued in desultory fashion; and yet I would not have this generally conceded rule so interpreted as to narrow the range of inquiry to one special department. It is not intended to encourage partisanship in books, to advocate exclusive attention to science, metaphysics,

political economy, biography, or *belles lettres*. Far from it. Each of these subjects has its appropriate place and its legitimate claims, and ought, as far as possible, to be dealt with fairly and on its merits. The point made is not that the mind should confine itself to a contracted and uniform class of works, but that it should establish the habit of making haste slowly by thinking its way carefully from cover to cover through such publications as it regards entitled to serious attention.

Bias in literature is not wholesome. A clergyman who in former days bitterly denounced novels, confessed that he had never perused one. Being criticised and ridiculed on his evident bigotry, and realizing that the point made against him was well taken, as it was hardly reasonable that he could judge intelligently unless he had examined for himself, he determined to look into the stories of Sir Walter Scott. For weeks — so runs the legend — he secluded himself, neglected his parish, repeated on Sunday old sermons, and was almost entirely alienated from his meals. At the end

of his experiment, he astonished his rapt auditors by telling them from the pulpit that he had found novels as pernicious as he had always supposed they were; that for three months he had done nothing but read them; and that they had so fascinated and interested him, he had been unable to write any discourses, or devote himself to his religious duties. His people smiled, and were not convinced; for his method had been transparently and amusingly irrational. What business had he to give his days and nights to romances? Such dissipation would naturally exhaust his vitality, and unfit him for ordinary work. No one in his senses would recommend such absurd devotion, and no one could expect any other sequence than a certain kind of revulsion following excess. It would have been very different with our parson if he had been moderate in his joys. If he had taken the novel as a refreshing or composing draught, as a stimulant or sedative, and had then consecrated his recuperated energies to more serious business, he would have been wiser and stronger for his indulgence.

His mistake has been frequently repeated in graver departments of reading. Some men have abandoned themselves to the seductions of science, and have become so infatuated with material things that no other study could possibly charm them. They have come to doubt the reality of everything outside of their special domain, particularly to question the reality of the spiritual and supernatural. Metaphysicians have at times rivalled them in exclusivism. To many teachers of intellectual philosophy there is nothing worthy of inquiry save man, and nothing in man of any importance save mind; and to all such the labors of enthusiastic physicists are incomprehensible and delusive. The thoroughgoing mathematician is usually credited with indifference, if not antipathy, to poetry, and poets are not supposed to be capable of appreciating the excellences of mathematics, and the worshipper at the shrine of the *literæ humaniores* has often been incurably blind to the altar of the *literæ divinæ*. They have been so completely absorbed in their sole idol as to have no eyes for the varied grandeurs

of the literary Pantheon. In this way one-sided men are fashioned; narrow, hard, dogmatic, intolerant of others' opinions, and disqualified by their unhappy bias for friendly co-operation with those who differ from them. It is, perhaps, not unfair to compare these partisans with the famous Ferrara geese, the magnitude of whose liver was fatal to their harmonious development. What was gained by one organ exhausted and impoverished the vitality of other organs. Like their present wretched successors of Strasburg, they were good for a preparation resembling the modern *pâte de foi gras*, on which a Heliogabalus might feed, but beyond such a dignity they were not fitted to attain. Abnormal attachment to one department of enlightenment must similarly tend to unnatural cultivation of a particular faculty, and consequently to a species of intellectual deformity. By this process not only is the character warped, but the possibilities of usefulness are circumscribed. It may afford some degree of nourishment and comfort to the gourmand who hungers for a special diet, but it can never

yield fulness of happiness or of mental life to its subject.

As wide as human interests ought to be the circle of human reading. A library in a sense ought to represent the universe, and the student ought to be on terms of correspondence with its every part. Thoroughness of method ought not to signify meagreness of territory, and intense sunlike illumination of a definite theme ought never to necessitate a narrowing of the horizon. Breadth of purpose and of view should go hand in hand with depth and vigor of execution. And while one kind of books should not be permitted entirely to usurp time and thought, to the displacement of others, so, if generous and genuine culture is craved, no books of any kind should be allowed to hinder the mind's close and intimate communion with itself. Reading may so occupy the restless intellect as to prevent reflection. This trifling preachment must be excused. The shop will intrude. I cannot altogether forget my vocation. But then, the warning is of moment. Not a few excellent people have overlooked the fact that

they needed to know themselves as well as to know what others had written. Failing at this point, they have become mere bookworms or bibliomaniacs. Their attention to the Babel of authors has rendered them oblivious to the speech of their own soul. The roar and clatter of many eloquent tongues without have drowned the plaintive sweetness of the voice within. They continue in ignorance of themselves, and, in my opinion, owing to this ignorance, never more than half understand the volumes they devour so greedily. These friends need to recall Sir Edwin Arnold's suggestive lines (see *Secret of Death*) : —

"It is not to be known by knowledge ! man
Wotteth it not by wisdom ! Learning vast
Halts short of it ! Only my soul itself
Is soul perceived — when the soul wills it so;
There shines no light save its own light to show
Itself unto itself."

If this shall be remembered, and if books shall impel the mind to explore itself, and to adjust itself to the mysterious universe of being, whether visible in humanity or invisible in God, reading shall have served its highest

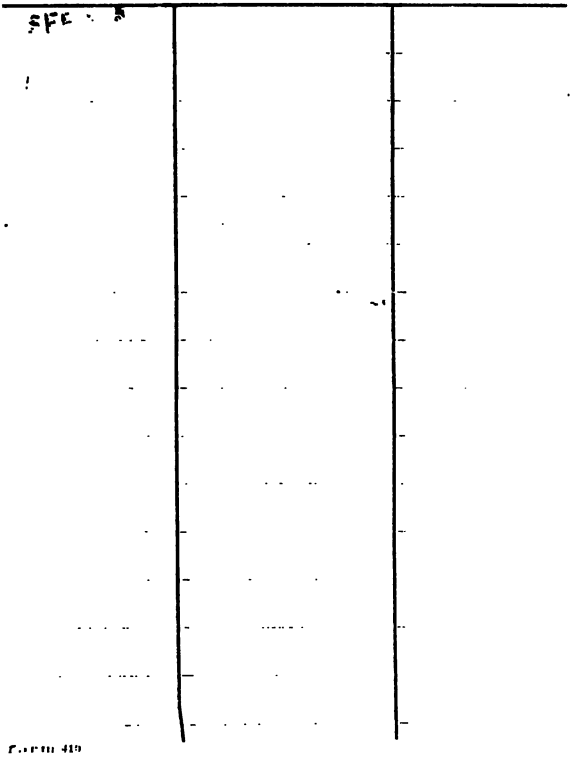
function, and shall have demonstrated the soundness of the method followed, and the sublimity of the motive honored. And then hopeful youth shall not waste his powers, nor merely teach himself

> "To jabber argument, chop logic, pore
> On sun and moon, and worship whirligig";

and neither shall he in his own person carry back to roaring bull what "predecessors cut to sphinx." But instead, the studious lad shall grow in God-grand selfhood, and with each shimmering of increasing knowledge give proof of soul unfolding, as "faintest circlet may prophesy the coming orb," while with "wise words launched by music on their voyage," he may help to fill the earth with "light and sweetness."

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to be taken from the Building



Form 419